

FILED

JAN 14 2015

In the Supreme Court of Iowa

**In the Matter of Establishment of)
and Appointments to the Iowa)
Family Law Case Processing) Order
Reform Task Force)**

CLERK SUPREME COURT

In 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court created a task force to study the strengths and weaknesses of the processes for resolving nondomestic civil cases and to propose reforms that would foster prompt, affordable, and high-quality resolution of such cases. Work of the Iowa Civil Justice Reform Task Force culminated with its January 2012 report, *Reforming the Iowa Civil Justice System*. Since then, the Iowa Judicial Branch has acted on a number of recommendations from the report, including establishment of expedited civil actions, adoption of discovery rule amendments, and establishment of a business court pilot project.

At the time of creation of the Iowa Civil Justice Reform Task Force, the court concluded that family law procedures warranted a separate, specialized study. The Iowa Civil Justice Reform Task Force conducted an extensive survey of more than 9,000 licensed Iowa attorneys and judges, and even though the survey specifically excluded family law matters, 65% of respondents volunteered that family law was an area in need of reform. Recent and successful implementation of civil justice reforms in the court system confirms the need and value of studying current family law practices and procedures to ensure that litigants and family members affected by family law cases are all receiving the best services and processes the Iowa court system can deliver.

In 2013, Iowa's trial courts handled approximately 45,393 family law cases, including: 11,252 dissolutions of marriage with children; 6,127 dissolutions of marriage without children; 5,638 administrative

support cases involving child support recovery; 1,720 adoption cases; 6,414 paternity cases; 6,521 civil domestic abuse cases; 5,808 child in need of assistance cases; and 1,913 termination of parental rights cases. Family law cases constitute nearly 22% of the caseload of all full-time judges. A family law case often is an Iowa citizen's first or only, and likely life changing, encounter with the court system. It is time to evaluate family law case processing in the Iowa court system to determine whether innovations or revised practices will better serve the people of Iowa.

To this end, the court establishes the Iowa Family Law Case Processing Reform Task Force (Task Force) to identify best practices for accessible, transparent, and consistent family law processes and to propose recommendations for new court processes and improvements to current processes for statewide adoption. The Task Force is encouraged to explore and recommend innovative solutions tailored to the Iowa court system that will foster just, prompt, and cost effective resolution of dissolutions of marriage and child custody cases, including the financial matters related to each. To accomplish this mission, the court directs the Task Force to:

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the present processes for resolving dissolutions of marriage and child custody cases in both original proceedings and modifications.
- Examine innovative procedures and programs used in other jurisdictions, including spousal support calculation guidelines, and from these procedures and programs, identify those that hold the most promise for Iowa litigants and the public at large.
- Propose case processing recommendations for just, efficient, and consistent procedures for citizens across the state.

To organize and oversee this effort, the court appoints the following persons to serve as the Task Force Steering Committee:

Honorable Thomas D. Waterman, Justice, Iowa Supreme Court, Davenport, chair.

Matthew J. Brandes, attorney, Cedar Rapids, co-chair and reporter.

Lora L. McCollom, attorney, West Des Moines, co-chair.

Dan Bechtol, Southwest Iowa Mediation Services, Atlantic.

Honorable Thomas N. Bower, Iowa Court of Appeals, Waterloo.

David Boyd, State Court Administrator, Des Moines.

Andrea Charlow, Drake University Law School, Des Moines.

Honorable Randy S. DeGeest, District Judge, Oskaloosa.

Ann Estin, University of Iowa College of Law, Iowa City.

Andrew B. Howie, attorney, West Des Moines.

Chad Kepros, attorney, Iowa City.

Steven Lytle, attorney, Des Moines.

Amy Moore, Mid Iowa Mediation, Ames.

Carrie O'Connor, Iowa Legal Aid, Dubuque.

Laura Parrish, attorney, Decorah.

Terry Parsons, attorney, Cedar Falls.

Elizabeth Rosenbaum, attorney, Sioux City.

Jenny L. Schulz, Kids First Law Center, Cedar Rapids.

Anjela A. Shutts, attorney, Des Moines.

The Task Force Steering Committee will provide the supreme court with recommendations for appointment of additional members of Task Force workgroups by May 1, 2015. The Steering Committee will consider gender, geographic, and racial diversity in making its recommendations.

The Task Force will report its findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the court by May 31, 2016.

Dated this 14th day of January, 2015.

The Supreme Court of Iowa

By Mark S. Cady
Mark S. Cady, Chief Justice